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AUTHORITY: 33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*

SOURCE: 48 FR 51405, Nov. 8, 1983, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—General Provisions

§ 131.1 Scope.

This part describes the requirements and procedures for developing, reviewing, revising, and approving water quality standards by the States as authorized by section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act. Additional specific procedures for developing, reviewing, revising, and approving water quality standards for Great Lakes States or Great Lakes Tribes (as defined in 40 CFR

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132.2) to conform to section 118 of the Clean Water Act and 40 CFR part 132, are provided in 40 CFR part 132.

[60 FR 15386, Mar. 23, 1995]

§ 131.2 Purpose.

A water quality standard defines the water quality goals of a water body, or portion thereof, by designating the use or uses to be made of the water and by setting criteria that protect the designated uses. States adopt water quality standards to protect public health or welfare, enhance the quality of water and serve the purposes of the Clean Water Act (the Act). “Serve the purposes of the Act” (as defined in sections 101(a)(2) and 303(c) of the Act) means that water quality standards should, wherever attainable, provide water quality for the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish and wildlife and for recreation in and on the water and take into consideration their use and value of public water supplies, propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife, recreation in and on the water, and agricultural, industrial, and other purposes including navigation.

Such standards serve the dual purposes of establishing the water quality goals for a specific water body and serve as the regulatory basis for the establishment of water-quality-based treatment controls and strategies beyond the technology-based levels of treatment required by sections 301(b) and 306 of the Act.

[48 FR 51405, Nov. 8, 1983, as amended at 80 FR 51046, Aug. 21, 2015]

§ 131.3 Definitions.

(a) *The Act* means the Clean Water Act (Pub. L. 92–500, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*)).

(b) *Criteria* are elements of State water quality standards, expressed as constituent concentrations, levels, or narrative statements, representing a quality of water that supports a particular use. When criteria are met, water quality will generally protect the designated use.

(c) *Section 304(a) criteria* are developed by EPA under authority of section 304(a) of the Act based on the latest scientific information on the relationship that the effect of a constituent

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concentration has on particular aquatic species and/or human health. This information is issued periodically to the States as guidance for use in developing criteria.

(d) *Toxic pollutants* are those pollutants listed by the Administrator under section 307(a) of the Act.

(e) *Existing uses* are those uses actually attained in the water body on or after November 28, 1975, whether or not they are included in the water quality standards.

(f) *Designated uses* are those uses specified in water quality standards for each water body or segment whether or not they are being attained.

(g) *Use attainability analysis* is a structured scientific assessment of the factors affecting the attainment of the use which may include physical, chemical, biological, and economic factors as described in § 131.10(g).

(h) *Water quality limited segment* means any segment where it is known that water quality does not meet applicable water quality standards, and/or is not expected to meet applicable water quality standards, even after the application of the technology-based effluent limitations required by sections 301(b) and 306 of the Act.

(i) *Water quality standards* are provisions of State or Federal law which consist of a designated use or uses for the waters of the United States and water quality criteria for such waters based upon such uses. Water quality standards are to protect the public health or welfare, enhance the quality of water and serve the purposes of the Act.

(j) *States* include: The 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Indian Tribes that EPA determines to be eligible for purposes of the water quality standards program.

(k) *Federal Indian Reservation, Indian Reservation, or Reservation* means all land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and including rights-of-way running through the reservation."

(l) *Indian Tribe or Tribe* means any Indian Tribe, band, group, or community recognized by the Secretary of the Interior and exercising governmental authority over a Federal Indian reservation.

(m) *Highest attainable use* is the modified aquatic life, wildlife, or recreation use that is both closest to the uses specified in section 101(a)(2) of the Act and attainable, based on the evaluation of the factor(s) in § 131.10(g) that preclude(s) attainment of the use and any other information or analyses that were used to evaluate attainability. There is no required highest attainable use where the State demonstrates the relevant use specified in section 101(a)(2) of the Act and sub-categories of such a use are not attainable.

(n) *Practicable*, in the context of § 131.12(a)(2)(ii), means technologically possible, able to be put into practice, and economically viable.

(o) A *water quality standards variance* (WQS variance) is a time-limited designated use and criterion for a specific pollutant(s) or water quality parameter(s) that reflect the highest attainable condition during the term of the WQS variance.

(p) *Pollutant Minimization Program*, in the context of § 131.14, is a structured set of activities to improve processes and pollutant controls that will prevent and reduce pollutant loadings.

(q) *Non-101(a)(2) use* is any use unrelated to the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, wildlife or recreation in or on the water.

[48 FR 51405, Nov. 8, 1983, as amended at 56 FR 64893, Dec. 12, 1991; 59 FR 64344, Dec. 14, 1994; 80 FR 51046, Aug. 21, 2015]

§ 131.4 State authority.

(a) States (as defined in § 131.3) are responsible for reviewing, establishing, and revising water quality standards. As recognized by section 510 of the Clean Water Act, States may develop water quality standards more stringent than required by this regulation. Consistent with section 101(g) and 518(a) of the Clean Water Act, water quality standards shall not be construed to supersede or abrogate rights to quantities of water.